

# **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES**

SAMPLE APPLICATION NARRATIVE



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Enduring Questions

Institution: University of Mary Washington



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS

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## **National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Education Programs**

### **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

This sample of the narrative portion from a grant is provided as an example of a funded proposal. It will give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. It is not intended to serve as a model. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with staff members in the NEH Division of Education Programs well before a grant deadline. This sample proposal does not include a budget, letters of commitment, résumés, or evaluations.

**Project Title:** NEH Enduring Questions Course on “What is Time?”

**Institution:** University of Mary Washington

**Project Director:** Jessie Fillerup

**Grant Program:** Enduring Questions

**NARRATIVE.** In a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatric Society*, patients with Alzheimer's disease were asked to draw clock faces with the hands depicting 2:45. Those with severe dementia struggled with the clock's shape and numerical organization. The study, which revealed a link between patients' temporal disorientation and their spatial perception of time, also generated an inadvertent byproduct: the notion that technology—and specifically, the proliferation of clocks—has radically changed the ways in which we experience time.

Or has it? Our preoccupation with time is at least as old as our attempts to measure it. In the fourth century CE, Augustine evoked a time in which temporalities converge in the present, which itself diminishes through its reliance on the remembered past and the expected future. Fifteen centuries later, Henri Bergson similarly described the perception of time as a psychological process, which generates a past in relation to the present through memory.

Both Augustine and Bergson were posing a question fundamental to human experience: What is time? Is it the product of natural laws or human consciousness? How is time measured and experienced? Does technology affect the perception of time, or are there transhistorical modes of perception that resist change? What is the relationship between time and space? How do multiple temporalities interact in the arts and sciences? I am proposing an interdisciplinary course that will explore these questions through music, whose performance and specialized rhythmic notation make it among the most explicitly temporal of the arts.

For today's digital-age student, the relevance of time as a topic of inquiry may not seem immediately apparent. Time is measured more precisely now than it has ever been before, and instantaneous communication seems to neutralize time: what is left to discuss? Yet today's student has surely experienced moments of tension between technological and experiential

measures of time—perhaps when waiting for a class to end, or when memories unexpectedly fracture the ordered continuity of the present. By confronting temporality, students may experience time in ways that challenge and enrich their daily clock-governed routines.

The fourteen-week course would consist of an introduction, three movements (units), and a coda (conclusion). Readings in the humanities and natural sciences would explore perceptions of time in conjunction with contemporaneous music. Although some readings would consist of selections, musical works would be studied in their entirety.

### **Introduction**

John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”

### **Movement I: Late Fourteenth/Early Fifteenth Century**

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*

Augustine, *Confessions*

Guillaume de Machaut, *My End is My Beginning* (song)

Baude Cordier, *With a Compass I Was Composed* (song)

Guillaume Dufay, *Nuper rosarum flores* (motet)

### **Movement II: Eighteenth Century**

Isaac Newton, *Principia*

Correspondence of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Samuel Clarke

Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Machine Man*

Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *The Marriage of Figaro*

Joseph Haydn, String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2, “The Joke”

Haydn, Symphony No. 101 in D Major, “The Clock”

Works for musical clock by Mozart and Haydn

### **Movement III: *Fin-de-siècle*/Early twentieth century**

Marcel Proust, *Swann’s Way*

Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*

Bergson, “The Perception of Change”

James Joyce, “The Dead”

Albert Einstein, *Relativity: The General and Special Theory*

Edgar Allan Poe, “A Descent into the Maelström”

Stéphane Mallarmé, “The Afternoon of a Faun”

Maurice Ravel, *The Spanish Hour* (opera)

Ravel, *Daphnis and Chloe* (ballet)

Claude Debussy, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (ballet and orchestral work)

## Conclusion

### Projects and Time Fair

Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" provides an introductory meditation on time and memory that sets up our study of temporal perception in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, when clocks began to proliferate in medieval towns. During this time, musical notation started to feature certain rhythmic values as stable units of measure, much like the discrete units of time marked by a clock. Our readings will include Chaucer's satirical treatment of time in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" and "The Miller's Tale," as well as Augustine's *Confessions* (an essential text for late medieval scholars). Our musical study will focus on Machaut's *My End is My Beginning*, a rondeau that musically depicts its text through structural devices; Cordier's *With a Compass I Was Composed*, which explores developments in rhythmic notation; and Dufay's *Nuper rosarum flores* (1436), whose rhythmic and proportional techniques evoke various times and spaces—metaphorical, imagined, and resurrected from the past.

We will begin Movement II with readings that describe the "clockwork universe": Newton's *Principia* (1687) and La Mettrie's *Machine Man* (1748). This cultural landscape, populated by clockwork metaphors and clinking automata, will lead us to selections from Sterne's satirical *Tristram Shandy*, as well as the exaggerated critical pamphlet that followed the novel's publication. Our study of Mozart's music will focus on representations of musical and dramatic time in *The Marriage of Figaro*, an opera whose action unfolds in the course of a single day. Haydn's "Joke" Quartet (Op. 33, No. 2) will furnish an opportunity to study temporality, expectation, and narrative in instrumental music, aided by our previous reading of *Tristram Shandy*. Perceptions of time through automata will be explored through Haydn's "Clock" symphony, along with his and Mozart's compositions for musical clock.

For the third movement, we revisit the relationship between time, memory, and consciousness, focusing on the *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth century. First, we will read selections from Proust's *Swann's Way* (1913), Bergson's *Time and Free Will* (1889), and Joyce's "The Dead" (1914). Einstein's emerging theories of time and space will be considered alongside the Bergson's essay, "The Perception of Change" (1911), which refutes Einstein's "spatialization" of time. Ravel's opera, *The Spanish Hour* (1911), takes place in a clock shop and unfolds in real time, yet its characters experience time differently and make frequent use of clockwork metaphors, inviting us to apply the Einstein-Bergson debate to the opera. The ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* (1913) layers mythic pasts with narratives that question memory and temporal perception. Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (1894) portrays the temporality of dreams and altered states of consciousness; Vladimir Nijinsky's choreography to the work adds narrative and spatial dimensions. As we study Ravel and Debussy's music, we will also read Mallarmé's "The Afternoon of a Faun" and Poe's "A Descent into the Maelström" (the latter for its influence on Ravel).

Though the musical works we study will vary in style and technique, we will explore them by asking similar questions: What is the temporal experience of the listener? What effects are produced through multiple temporalities? How might the experiences of the performer and the listener differ? How does musical time intersect with contemporary cultural phenomena? How is time measured and perceived? What is time?

Because the course would be offered to both music majors and non-majors, it would make limited use of musical vocabulary, instead relying on metaphors, narrative strategies, and cultural studies when examining the music. The course focuses primarily on Western thought

because the language of music is both discipline-specific and often particular to certain regions and musical traditions; focusing the course on Western music will help limit the need for new musical vocabulary.

**Course Design.** The course would be offered to both music majors and non-majors as an interdisciplinary general education offering. As a speaking intensive course, class size would be capped at fifteen students. During the grant period, the course would be taught during the Spring and Fall 2011 semesters, with revision during the summer term. It has University and departmental support, as indicated by the accompanying documents.

A typical class would involve brief analytical and creative writing projects, guided listening, and discussion of assigned readings. The students and I would alternate conducting the discussions, which would distribute responsibility across the class and build a sense of community. Students will also work in a learning group of five that will maintain a course blog corresponding to an assigned unit. The first learning group, for example, will post content relating to the fourteenth century, including personal narratives, role-playing, and analyses of works. The rest of the class will act as respondents for that unit. Roles change with the next unit when a new learning group will take charge of the webpage, and the previous group will become respondents. Guest lecturers will be asked to write responses on the course blog following their visits; the Division of Teaching and Learning Technologies at UMW will assist with interactive multimedia content. The site will be open to public view. Students will also attend a concert, opera, or ballet and write about their experience on the course blog.

In the last two weeks of class students will present their final projects, which will explore time through varied media, draw conceptual inspiration from multiple disciplines, and

include an experiential dimension. Projects may consider non-Western and contemporary conceptions of time. Students will stage a Time Fair at several venues around campus, where their projects will be performed, demonstrated, and experienced simultaneously. Participants in the Time Fair will be invited to share their reactions on the course blog, bringing the campus community into the classroom. My hope is that the Fair will inspire all of us to become conscious of a phenomenon that we take for granted, encouraging us to think about the ways in which we use, waste, measure, perceive, and share time.

I would do much of the preparation for the course from June to August 2010, reading the texts that will be assigned to students along with relevant scholarly interpretations. I would also set up the course website before the semester and enlist the support of UMW's Division of Teaching and Learning Technology to assist students with the multimedia blog content.

**Project Director.** I often find that questions and problems that arise in my teaching stimulate my research, which derives its interdisciplinary motivation from my training in music, art history, and literature. My dissertation examined temporality and the grotesque in Ravel's music through the lenses of literary criticism, aesthetics, reception histories, and the visual arts. A part of my work applied Paul Ricoeur's discussion of chronological time, narrated time, and the interplay of time and memory to selected works of Poe. My research also guided me to studies of 17th and 18th-century automata, which in turn has informed my teaching of the music of those eras. Medieval music is not a research area for me, but it is an analytical strength and an area that I enjoy teaching. Through this course, I hope to cultivate a sense of wonder and awareness about time in my students, while at the same time developing and reflecting upon my own related research.



## PRELIMINARY COURSE READING LIST

### Texts

- Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Translated by F.L. Pogson. New York: Harper, 1960.
- Bergson, Henri. "The Perception of Change." In *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarky, 248-66. New York: Continuum, 2002.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. 2d ed. Edited by V.A. Kolve and Glending Olson. New York: Norton, 2005.
- Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and General Theory*. Translated by Robert W. Lawson. New York: Pi Press, 2005.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, and Samuel Clarke. *Correspondence*. Edited by Roger Ariew. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000.
- La Mettrie, Julien Offray de. *La Mettrie: Machine Man and Other Writings*. Translated and edited by Ann Thomson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Collected Poems and Other Verse*. Translated by E.H. and A.M. Blackmore. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Newton, Isaac. *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. Translated by I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Modern Library, 1965.
- Proust, Marcel. *Swann's Way*. Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D.J. Enright. New York: Modern Library, 1992.
- Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Edited by Howard Anderson. New York: Norton, 1979.

### Music

(Scores will not be used, since most students in the course will not read music.)

- Cordier, Baudé. *With a Compass I Was Composed* (song).
- Debussy, Claude. *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (ballet and orchestral work).
- Dufay, Guillaume. *Nuper rosarum flores* (motet).
- Haydn, Joseph. String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2, "The Joke" (chamber music).
- Haydn, Joseph. Symphony No. 101 in D Major, "The Clock."
- Machaut, Guillaume de. *My End is My Beginning* (song).
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *The Marriage of Figaro*.
- Ravel, Maurice. *Daphnis and Chloe* (ballet).
- Ravel, Maurice. *The Spanish Hour* (opera).
- Works for musical clock by Haydn and Mozart.

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### **Primary Sources: Texts**

- Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Translated by F.L. Pogson. New York: Harper, 1960.
- Bergson, Henri. "The Perception of Change." In *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarky, 248-66. New York: Continuum, 2002.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. 2d ed. Edited by V.A. Kolve and Glending Olson. New York: Norton, 2005.
- Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and General Theory*. Translated by Robert W. Lawson. New York: Pi Press, 2005.
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- La Mettrie, Julien Offray de. *La Mettrie: Machine Man and Other Writings*. Translated and edited by Ann Thomson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Collected Poems and Other Verse*. Translated by E.H. and A.M. Blackmore. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Newton, Isaac. *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. Translated by I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Modern Library, 1965.
- Proust, Marcel. *Swann's Way*. Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D.J. Enright. New York: Modern Library, 1992.
- Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Edited by Howard Anderson. New York: Norton, 1979.

### **Music**

- Cordier, Baude. *Tout par compas* (song).
- Debussy, Claude. *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (ballet and orchestral).
- Dufay, Guillaume. *Nuper rosarum flores* (motet).
- Haydn, Joseph. String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2, "The Joke" (chamber music).
- Haydn, Joseph. Symphony No. 101 in D Major, "The Clock" (orchestral).
- Machaut, Guillaume de. *Ma fin est ma commencement* (song).
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *The Marriage of Figaro* (song).
- Ravel, Maurice. *Daphnis and Chloe* (ballet).
- Ravel, Maurice. *The Spanish Hour* (opera).
- Works for musical clock by Haydn and Mozart.

### **Secondary Sources**

- Berger, Anna Maria Busse. *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Berger, Karol. *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

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- Mooney, Linne R. "The Cock and the Clock: Telling Time in Chaucer's Day." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer: The Yearbook of the New Chaucer Society* 15 (1993): 91-109.
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- Pearson, Keith Ansell. *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual: Bergson and the Time of Life*. London: Routledge, 2002.
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